

CLAIMS

1. A computer network, comprising:

5 a plurality of network appliances that optimize the performance of domains hosted on geographically distributed, mirrored network sites;

a client computer capable running a session to display or change the configuration of said network appliances; and

a network over which said network appliances and said client computer communicate;

10 wherein said network appliances located at each mirror site work in concert to direct client connections to a network site with the optimal response time to said client.

2. The computer network of Claim 1, wherein said network appliance communicates with each other through an authenticated protocol on top of a communications protocol.

3. The computer network of Claim 1, wherein said network appliance communicates with said client computer through a TCP protocol.

4. The computer network of Claim 1, wherein said client computer runs a secure or insecure Telnet session to display or modify the configuration of said network appliances.



constructing a message with a security component by a first network appliance, wherein said message comprises a message header followed by one or more message components, wherein said message header is used to identify message type and protocol version being used, wherein said message components are used for any data said message may contain;

receiving said message header by a second network appliance,

receiving said security component by said second network appliance,
wherein said second network appliance verifies said message; and

6. The method of Claim 5, wherein each said network appliance is configured with one or more security keys.

8. The method of Claim 5, wherein said security component contains a key ID.

9. The method of Claim 5, wherein said step of receiving said security component comprises the step of:

verifying said message by computing a hash using a key identified by a key ID included in said security component.

10. The method of Claim 5, wherein if security is disabled on said first network appliance, said security component is ignored by said second network appliance.

11. A process for Internet site selection, comprising the steps of:

synchronizing by said first Internet appliance through a separate TCP/IP connection with other Internet appliances; and

13. A method for site selection by routing client request to a optimal server according to claim 11, comprising:

establishing, by said client, TCP connection to a first web site and sending HTTP GET request for a resource from a global domain to a first Internet appliance coupled to said first web site, wherein said global domain is registered in DNS with a unique URL;

forwarding, by said first Internet appliance, an HTTP redirect to other Internet appliances at other Web sites;

sending rely simultaneously by said Internet appliances at all participating Web sites send, wherein the source IP's are spoofed to that of said first Web site, wherein said first Web site's reply is an HTTP redirect to the server IP at said first Web site, wherein each of other Web sites' replies is an HTTP redirect at its own site; and

checking local sites' operability, wherein if said first Web site's server is dead, said first Web site will send a redirect to a server at a different Web site, wherein if said first Web site's server is just slow, said first Web site will send its redirect later to give other Web sites a better chance of winning the footrace.

14. A method for site selection by routing client request to a optimal server according to claim 11, comprising:

establishing, by said client, TCP connection to a first web site and sending HTTP GET request for a resource from a global domain to a first Internet appliance coupled to said first web site, wherein DNS resolves the

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5 returning, by said first Internet appliance, an HTML page with link requests for each member of a group of participating Internet appliances, wherein said HTML page includes a meta tag that causes an HTML refresh command at said client;

requesting, by said client, various images from said Internet appliances
10 specified in said HTML page, wherein said images are small and non-
viewable;

returning, by each said Internet appliance, said image data and measuring a Round Trip Time (RTT) between itself and said client during TCP handshaking;

15 sending, by each said Internet appliance, said RTT data back to said
synchronizing Internet appliance, *i.e.*, said first Internet appliance, over inter-
box protocol (IBP), wherein said synchronizing Internet appliance updates its
Client Network Cache (CNC) with said new RTT data;

executing an HTML refresh by said client upon receipt all of said image
20 data, wherein said refresh causes a repeat of step 1;

selecting, by said synchronizing Internet appliance, a local domain with the lowest RTT, and redirecting said client to the Web site with the lowest RTT, wherein said client finishes a session with said Web; and



sending, by said synchronizing Internet appliance, new client network data to other Internet appliances, wherein each Internet appliance updates its CNC.

15. A method for site selection by routing client request to a optimal server
5 according to claim 11, comprising:

establishing, by said client, TCP connection to a first web site and sending HTTP GET request for a resource from a global domain to a first Internet appliance coupled to said first web site, wherein DNS resolves the domain name to the IP address of said first Internet appliance in said global
10 domain, wherein said global domain is registered in DNS with a unique URL, wherein said first Internet appliance acts as a synchronizing Internet appliance;

proxying, by said synchronizing Internet appliance, connection to original server, and responding with requested content, wherein said
15 synchronizing Internet appliance also inserts image links to other participating Internet appliances;

following, by said client, said links to said other participating Internet appliances and allowing them to determine the Round Trip Times (RTT) to said client, wherein said times are then reported back to said synchronizing
20 Internet appliance over inter-box protocol (IBP);

establishing TCP connection to said synchronizing Internet appliance and sending HTTP GET request; and

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17. A method for site selection by routing client request to a optimal server according to claim 11, comprising:

establishing, by said client, TCP connection to a first web site and sending HTTP GET request for a resource from a global domain to a first Internet appliance coupled to said first web site, wherein DNS resolves the domain name to the IP address of said first Internet appliance in said global domain, wherein said global domain is registered in DNS with a unique URL, wherein said first Internet appliance acts as a synchronizing Internet appliance;

sending, by said synchronizing Internet appliance, a pre-built redirect message to every participating Internet appliance, including said synchronizing Internet appliance, wherein said pre-built redirect message's global domain URL is included in its domain portion, wherein said global domain URL is a DNS-registered URL for said global domain;

inserting, by each Internet appliance, its local domain ID into a resource path and sending the redirect message to said client at the precise time specified by said synchronizing Internet appliance.

integrating, by said client, the earliest redirect message it receives into a TCP stream and sending a GET to said global domain URL;

recognizing, by said synchronizing Internet appliance, said local domain ID and redirecting said client to the corresponding local domain URL, wherein said client finishes a session with the Web site that sent said earliest redirect message; and

sending, said synchronizing Internet appliance, the new client network data to other Internet appliances, wherein each Internet appliance updates its Client Network Cache (CNC).

18. A computer network for geographic site selection, comprising:

5 a Web client sending HTTP a request;

a plurality of geographically distributed Web sites for a Web site domain serving said Web client;

a plurality of Internet appliances, each co-located with one Web site;

and

10 an Internet over which said Web sites and said Internet appliances
communicate.

19. The computer network of Claim 18, wherein said Web sites each registered in DNS with a unique name.

20. The computer network of Claim 18, wherein said Internet appliances are
15 configured to participate in a common group representing said computer
network as a whole.

21. The computer network of Claim 18, wherein said Internet appliances are entered DNS as said Web site domain.

22. The computer network of Claim 18, wherein each said Internet appliance
20 is configured to redirect said Web client to the unique domain name of co-
located Web site.

23. A method of geographic site selection, comprising:

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a Web client sending HTTP a request;

a main site serving said Web client that uses a load switch as load balancer;

a plurality of geographically distributed Web site caches providing
5 static content for said main site;

a main Internet appliance co-located with said main site;

a plurality of distributed Internet appliance, each co-located with one Web site cache; and

an Internet over which said Web sites and said Internet appliances
10 communicate.

53. The computer network of Claim 52, wherein said Internet appliances are configured to participate in a common group representing said network as a whole.

54. The computer network of Claim 52, wherein said Internet appliances are
15 entered in DNS as said Web site domain.

55. The computer network of Claim 52, wherein each said Internet appliance is configured to redirect said Web client to said main site.

56. A method for directing a client to most optimal content in a distributed content environment, comprising the steps of:

20 communicating, by said client, to a first Web site, which receives client requests, wherein said first Web site maintains TCP connections with all available distributed Web sites,



59. The method of Claim 56, wherein said step of tunneling comprises the sub-steps of:

filtering client requests for content by a filter coupled to said first Internet appliance;

5 forwarding filtered client requests by said filter to a corresponding address on said first Internet appliance coupled to said first Web site;

determining by said first Internet appliance the optimal Web site to said client based on each Web site's response time to said client; and

10 sending client packets by said first site selector to a second site selector coupled to a second Web site which is the optimal Web site to said client.

60. The method of Claim 56, wherein said filter is a URL switch, responsible for filtering URL requests from said client based on the content that said client is requesting and directing said requests to specific IP addresses and port
15 numbers on said first site selector with which said switch co-locates.

61. The method of Claim 59, wherein said sub-step of filtering client requests for content may be performed by said first site selector which is extended to perform URL scanning.

20 62. The method of Claim 56, wherein the step of responding comprises the sub-steps of:

receiving, by said second site selector, said client packets;

retrieving, by said second site selector, the embedded URL from a configured location coupled to said second site selector; and

responding, by said second site selector, to said client as a lightweight proxy for said first site selector, wherein said second Web site sends content
5 packets to said client as if it were said first Web site.

63. The method of Claim 56, wherein said distributed content environment includes Web caches or other non-collocated server devices.

64. The method of Claim 56, further comprising the step of:

determining the group of distributed Internet appliances for said client
10 requests by the IP/Port combination on which said first Internet appliance receives said client requests.

65. The method of Claim 56, further comprising the step of:

choosing a distributed Internet appliance based on URL request from said Web client.

15 66. The method of Claim 56, further comprising the step of:

choosing a distributed Internet appliance based on the IP address of said Web client.

67. The method of Claim 56, further comprising the step of:

assigning a most available distributed Internet appliance to said Web
20 client for a configurable time.

68. The method of Claim 56, further comprising the step of:

removing any association of said Web client with a distributed Internet appliance by said first Internet appliance in the event of a failure of a distributed Internet appliance.

69. The method of Claim 56, further comprising the step of:

- 5 determining new optimal distributed Internet appliance to said client when any association of said Web client to a distributed Internet appliance is removed.